



**March 2014 Special Edition**

**Houston Area Live Steamers**

**Volume 2014 Issue SE1**

# Contents

Welcome to the Stack Talk ..... 3

Houston Live Steamers – Partial History ..... 3

*“Since 1991”*

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## **Stack Talk**

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## Welcome to the Stack Talk

By “Steamer” Bill Smith, Stack Talk Editor

This month we are bringing you a Special Edition of the Stack Talk.

HALS Member Paul DeVerter has written a History of the Houston Live Steamers. It is presented here in its entirety.

Enjoy. . .

~~~The End ~~~

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## Houston Live Steamers – Partial History

By Paul DeVerter, HALS Member

This is a partial history of the Houston Live Steamers. It is taken from entries in the Newsletter of the Gulf Coast Chapter – National Railway Historical Society, Inc. supplemented by a number of personal comments, and a short item or two in the Southwestern Live Steamer news.

I have mostly retyped the entries that were placed in the issues of Gulf Coast Railroading, edited by George C. Werner. As organized, the group started out as the Live Steam Division of the Gulf Coast Chapter, as is explained in one of the last entries. At one time Passes were printed which served as membership cards. That was after the group began the construction of the layout in a large yard in the southeast part of Houston, on Fuqua and a bit east of the Santa Fe tracks.

Some of the entries are self-explanatory, others not so much. If I think they need further explanation, I have added Comments. Here we go.

**GULF COAST RAILROADING**  
GULF COAST CHAPTER NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.  
P. O. BOX 457 • HOUSTON, TEXAS 77001



**May 1967** Six members were able to take the Texas Chief trip to Ft. Worth on May 6. As usual, the Santa Fe ran an excellent train. Although time in Ft. Worth was limited, most members visited and rode Leonard’s M&O Subway while Paul DeVerter inspected an N gauge live steamer.

**Comment:** Many did not believe that it was possible to build a live steam engine in N gauge. However, I saw it run, and took a number of slides, maybe even a movie shot or two. The oval of track was built on

a card table, as I recall, and the engine looked like a typical English inside cylinder locomotive with tender. It was painted green, and had a single oscillating cylinder under the boiler, and was fired by alcohol from the tender. The builder was a young man whose name I cannot now find, but he lived in Ft. Worth. This was the first operating live steam engine running on a track that I had ever seen. At the time I was machining castings and working on a  $\frac{3}{4}$  scale, 3  $\frac{1}{2}$ " gauge Juliet II.

The artwork above is from the noted publication. It depicts an MP loco, and is one of many pieces of type we found in the attic of Union Station. They were obviously from the publicity group of MP in Houston, as most related to Missouri Pacific subjects. The box full of such type objects was stored in our cars at Union Station for a long time. Whether it exists today, I do not know. The only odd thing I found in the collection was a rectangular logo for the Port Arthur Route, i.e. KCS, and why it was there remains a mystery.

**March 1968** Since Paul DeVerter's  $\frac{3}{4}$ " scale live steam engine is only weeks away from completion, several members have decided to start construction of a live steam layout. They have located a five acre site and construction of the 3  $\frac{1}{2}$ " gage tracks should start soon. If anyone else is interested, contact Paul.

**Comment:** The five acre tract belonged to the Kercher family who lived at 3401 Fuqua, and actually was a part of their back yard. This was of course a precarious situation, since Bill Kercher, although a railfan, was not a live steamer, and in fact did not own the land, but was merely a tenant, as I recall. The property was somewhat damp after a hard rain. and the land was covered with Crawfish mounds, but otherwise suitable for a layout. The numerous crawfish mounds led me to name my personal route for them: Crawdad Creek RR. There was no electricity, nor other utility, on the area we were allotted – just vacant land with a house toward the front, and neighbors a couple of hundred yards away, equally spread out.

**April 1968** The Live Steam Division has now been organized with R. W. Keeling appointed Superintendent. A 440' oval has been surveyed and bids received on some of the track and trestle materials. Since the live steamers are financing their layout separately from the regular chapter treasury, a \$20 initiation fee has been set to pay for the necessary materials. A monthly dues structure will be established later.

**Comment:** My recollection is that the dues structure was never rigidly implemented, probably because in the end the interest waned as the work progressed, until there were only about 5 or 6 active participants. The surveying consisted of using a transit to lay out an oval for the track, which was to be elevated on a pier and beam structure, arranged for riding by straddling the track.

R. W. Keeling was the current President of the Gulf Coast Chapter, and quite a historian whose collection of photographs of steam engines for short line and particularly logging railroads in the Piney Woods was quite extensive. As I recall, about 40% of the Chapter expressed initial interest in building a live steam layout.

**May 1968** The Live Steam Division has now collected \$200, but still lacks about \$100 to start its layout. We are trying to obtain some used ties from the HB&T for the trestle work.

**July 1968** A Club Track Lease was executed by member Bill Kercher assuring the Live Steam Division of a site. About 75 ties have been set in holes in the ground for the club track. The next step is to level them up and tamp them in. After that the cross beams will be installed.

**Comment:** The ties were obtained used from the HB&T, and later from Union Station as tracks were removed and the sheds torn down over 4 tracks. The ties were, of course, old but in reasonable shape for our intended use, as vertical piers. The scheme was to nail 2x4's on either side of the oval of ties, and attach horizontal stringers of redwood planks between them. On the top of the planks we would nail ties. The ties were cut from scrap wood, and had 3 grooves milled or dadoed into their tops which acted a gauge for the 3 ½" and 4 ¾ " dual gauge track which we were building.

The holes for the piers were at first dug by hand with shovels and a post hole digger. This was exceedingly slow, so Bob Armstrong arranged to get a tractor with a vertical augur attachment, and this made very quick work of drilling appropriate holes for the piers. The ties were made of 1" lumber, cut to size with a radial arm saw. Jack Pearson reminded me that the ties were all treated by Bob Armstrong in his wife's kitchen. He would fill a bucket with the new ties, and the fill the bucket with a creosote compound, and heat the whole thing on the stove, which caused the ties to absorb a lot of creosote

Most of the hard work in securing the ties and the wood was done by Bob Armstrong. Some of us helped load the ties onto a flat bed trailer to haul them from Union Station to Kercher's house. I remember them being quite heavy, especially for an out of shape lawyer playing trains. At the same time, I was down at Union Station quite a bit working on the newly acquired MP coach #1141, and making arrangements to move the Good Cheer from the KCS in Beaumont to the SP for our Club's first private car trip.

**September 1968** The live steam division is now tamping in the uprights and hopes to have at least 40 feet of track operational by the end of September.

**October 1968** The live steam division has now leveled and tamped enough piers for about 100 feet of track. Girders are now going in place and 300 feet of rail has been received. We should be running 3 ½" and 4 ¾" gage equipment very soon.

**November 1968** The Live Steam Division is moving right along. About 40' of track have been attached to the ties and we are nearing the operational stage.

**February 1969** LIVE STEAM NEWS – January 19, 1969 was a red letter day for the Live Steamers. On that date, the first run was made on our track, the Crawdad Creek Railroad. Under steam no less. Paul DeVerter ran his ¾" scale 0-4-0T on the 3 ½" gauge track. The event was duly recorded by Bill Kercher, and those of at the January meeting were privileged to hear a taped replay of the first run.

The Live Steamers are organized as a Division of the Chapter, and are separately run and financed. We welcome new members. The dues are currently \$20 initiation and \$2.50 per month. Obviously, as the invested capital goes up, so will the fees. All the funds are used for track and grade materials.

Currently, we have 60 feet of track operable in 3 ½" and 4 ¾" gauges. This is mounted on trestles so that you may ride astride a flat car. We hope to finish our 440 foot loop this summer.

Meetings are held at the tracksite each Sunday, weather permitting. Time is 2 p.m. at Bill Kercher's, 3401 Fuqua.

**March 1969** LIVE STEAM NEWS – Mr. Harry Dixon, Western Secretary of the Brotherhood of Live Steamers, has forwarded a "gold spike" to be used when the loop of track is completed. If we're lucky, it may be this fall. Our activities were recently written up in the magazine LIVE STEAM as well as in the Lone Star Region's MARKER LAMP.

We now have 75 feet of track complete and will soon start on the 40 foot radius semi-circles at the ends of the layout. 600 feet of rail is on order, which will make up as 200 feet of dual gauge track. A trip to Conroe by Bob Armstrong and Paul DeVerter resulted in enough wood to make a large batch of ties. Grogan Brothers Lumber Company donated the lumber.

At the last regular Chapter meeting, we were honored by the visit of Mr. Austin F. Barr who is Central Secretary of the B of LS. He briefly explained the central register of live steam modelers, and invited everyone to attend the 7 ½" gauge meet to be held on his farm at the junction of highways 1 and 214, R. F. D. 2, Harrisburg, Arkansas 72432, on April 11-13. There should be at least six engines operating on the ½ mile of track.

**Comment:** The golden spike was a gold anodized aluminum spike, which we did in fact use many months later. As you can tell from the dates as they appear, nothing happened nearly as quickly as we thought it would. George Werner and I attended the meet at Austin Barr's farm, and had a great time. I believe I took my little Juliet and ran it on a homemade treadmill arrangement.

**April 1969** LIVE STEAM NOTES – It has been just a little over a year since the six of us got together a Bill Kercher's to plan our live steam track. Progress has been steady, but considerably slower than anticipated. However, we now have 80 feet of dual gauge track in operating condition. Also, we have the holes dug and the piers lying in them for the rest of our 440 foot oval. After the Lafayette trips, we will start tamping the piers on the south semi-circle, and then put up the girders. We have also received another shipment of rail. If you're interested in helping, contact me as we work on Sunday afternoons.

Jake DeVries has finished the frame on his 1" scale Tom Thumb, and is about ready to start on the boiler.

**Comment:** The Lafayette trips refers to the runs we made from Houston to Lafayette and back with the GOOD CHEER, and of course has nothing to do with live steam, but was a regular Chapter activity. It was because of this that I was spread rather thin in time to spend on live steam activities.

**July 1969** Live Steam Notes – Sorry I missed the column last month. But I was on vacation. A great deal of progress has been made at the track site. On May 25, ten more piers were set at the proper height and wiring was installed for electricity at the track. On June 29, girders were nailed in place for about fifty feet more track on the east end. We have about ninety feet of runable track and ten feet more already prefabricated.

I had the opportunity to visit the Golden Gate Live Steamers track in Oakland on June 8. They have a dog-bone layout with 3/4" and 1" elevated on concrete "A frames" and with 1" and 1 1/2" on the ground. The track includes both a turntable and a transfer table to accommodate about sixteen engines. All locomotive boilers must be hydrostatically by club officials once a year. This is a very hospitable group and you should visit them if you have the opportunity.

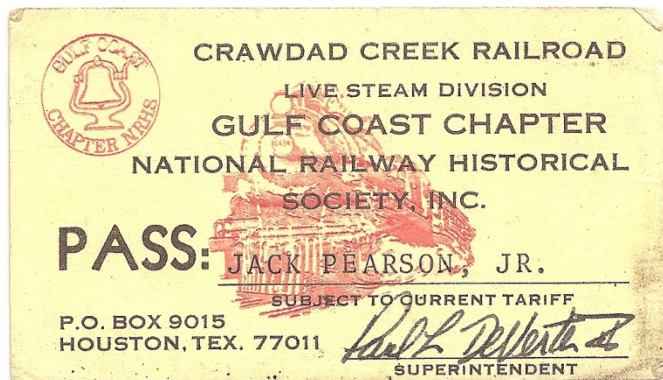
We received some very nice publicity in the Marker Lamp, the publication of the Lone Star Region, NMRA, both as to the live steamers and the Palestine trip. We were also favored with a full page in the March issue of Live Steam magazine. Photos of members' activities in black and white are needed.

A live steam meet will be held in Falfurrias, Texas over Labor Day weekend. More details will follow.

Passes are enclosed for those members who have paid their Live Steam initiation fee of \$20. We would welcome new members.

P.L.D. II

**Comment:** The wiring mentioned was a jury rigged extension from the back of Kercher's house to a pole or two to get to the track with 120v, to run a blower or a small electric drill. My own blower was made with a small automobile heater fan, so I could run it off of 12v DC, using the battery in my automobile. The reference to Palestine refers to a trip the Chapter made on the GOOD CHEER to Palestine about a month before the MP dropped the Eagle Service to Houston, thus making Union Station a one railroad passenger station. At that point is time nearly everyone shot photos with Kodachrome film, hence the request for B&W photos. Below is a copy of the Pass referred to. The Chapter has a small Kelsey letter press, which I learned to use and on which I set type, so I made the passes up from scratch. At that point in my life I could still read 6 point type reasonably well – not so today.



**August 1969** Mr. Bob Armstrong gave a run-down on the latest to come from our Live Steam Division, the Crawdad Creek Railroad, over at Bill Kercher's in the south part of Houston. To date over 100 feet of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1" scale track has been laid and work is progressing well albeit slowly.

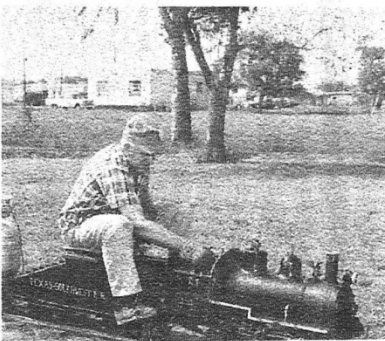
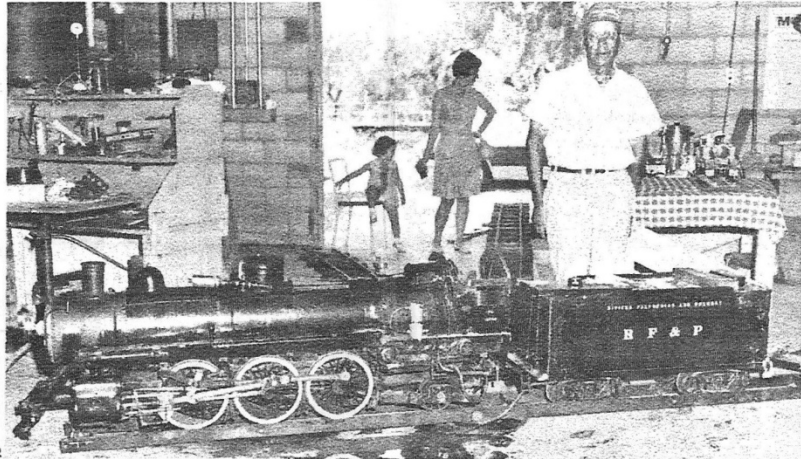
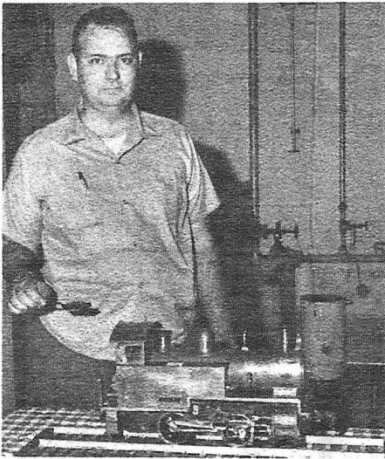
**September 1969** Also, work is progressing on the live steam layout where 130 feet of trestle work is now complete. If interested, contact Paul DeVerter.

**October 1979** LIVE STEAM NEWS – The first Texas Live Steam Meet was held at the track of Mr. J. J. Yates in Falfurrias over the Labor Day weekend. The track is 1  $\frac{1}{2}$ " scale (7  $\frac{1}{2}$ ' gauge) and these are really big engines. Mr. John Enders of Austin brought his new Atlantic which, incidentally, burns diesel fuel. It performed well and hauled nine adults even though the springing has not been adjusted yet. Mr. Ces Beck of San Antonio brought his propane burning 0-4-0 switcher while Mr. Yates ran his kerosene fired Pacific.

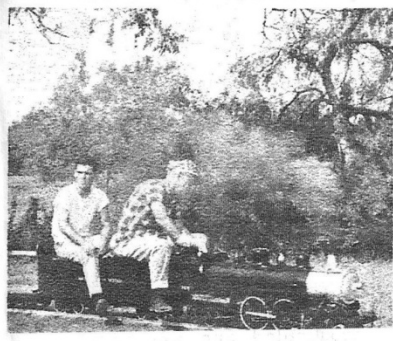
Monday proved disastrous for the big boys. Mr. Yates ran over the points of a switch, which derailed the Pacific, causing it to roll over on the ground. The brake rigging, a cylinder cock and the leading truck were all damaged. Ces could not get his engine to perform smoothly and it was taken out of service, while John blew the throttle gasket and was disabled. Only Paul DeVerter's tiny JULIET II, an 0-4-0T,  $\frac{3}{4}$ " scale switcher which had been blocked up on 2x4's for operation as a no 3  $\frac{1}{2}$ ' track was available, upheld the good name of live steam for the fans. JULIET ran very well on coal to the amazement of all.

Below is a photo of the page in Live Steam Magazine talking about the meet held in Falfurrias. The photocopy is not too good, and I do not have any better photos that I can lay my hands on at the moment.





Paul DeVerter of Houston (1) prepares to fire up his "Juliet II" at the First Texas Meet. Host Yates (2) and his Pacific which was back-shopped after a minor derailment which damaged the lead truck. The engine returned to the track before the end of the meet. Ces Beck (3) at the throttle of his "Butane Flash" switcher waits on the lead track while John Enders of Austin (4) takes a train load of passengers around the main line.



Closer to home, Jake DeVries is coming right along with his 1" scale Tom Thumb, the boiler now being complete. Don Kroeger has finished the frame, wheels and axles on his 3/4" scale TICH while Paul DeVerter has started on a 3/4" scale caboose. Club members have also acquired a considerable amount of built up equipment, just about cleaning out John Enders' (of Austin) supply of 1" scale in the process. George Werner now has a 1" Atlantic and Fred Springer a 1" 0-4-0. Fred will be operating his locomotive on the tracks of the New Jersey Live Steamers. The CLUB now has a 1" scale diesel in the custody of Jack Pearson. Drew Cornell (of Lafayette, Louisiana) has an American in 1 1/2" scale built by Torn's Machine and Engineering Company in Austin. Several members saw this locomotive while it was being broken in.

**Comment:** I bought several cars and a diesel from John Enders and brought them to Houston, for potential use on our track. As you will see from the next report, they were up too high if you rode on them as engineer. Ultimately, I loaned them to Marshall Black who had some ground laid 1" scale track, where they stayed for many years, seeing little service.

George Werner bought John Ender's 1" scale Atlantic. He was living in an apartment at the time, and it was very hard to manhandle, so he soon sold it and bought the 0-4-0 Juliet that I remember, and is shown in the Golden Spike photo that appears later. Fred Springer bought an 0-4-0 1" scale engine for his entry into the live steam fraternity. He was living in NJ at the time, and was a member of the New Jersey Live Steamers. He then bought a 1 1/2" scale engine, and kept both. He subsequently had a dual gauge track at Salado.

**November 1969** Our track is progressing. A new track-laying method has been adapted from that used by the Northern Illinois Live Steamers resulting in two men being able to complete 20 feet in 1 ½ hours.

The 1" scale boys tried out the club diesel on our track and decided that these engines are too large for use on trestles. When you sit on the cab of a diesel or the tender of a steamer, your center of gravity is much too high. The 1' track will be built on the ground.

After the San Antonio trip with the GOOD CHEER, Mr. Marshall Black invited the members out to view his Mallet and Pacific under steam. Unfortunately the Mallet blew a boiler tube after the 4<sup>th</sup> trip, so the Pacific was fired up. This boiler had an internal leak which prevented maintaining full boiler pressure.

Mr. Harold Timm of Dallas arranged for our members to see, ride behind and operate Allen Guiberson's 10-wheeler in Dallas during our trip to Ft. Worth aboard the VERDE VALLEY. This is a beautiful engine. Allen has about 600' of 7 ½" gauge track at his home. He also displayed several smaller models, including a Stuart-Turner triple expansion marine engine. His motorized modern art was also fascinating. Allen is working on a steam driven bus for Ling-Temco-Vought. Perhaps we shall be hearing more of this in the future. Paul DeVerter

**Comment:** The trips to San Antonio and to Ft. Worth were both Chapter run trips with our equipment. The motorized art work of Guiberson was extremely unusual to me. If you sat and watched a piece of art consisting of a polished and framed plank, that included an artistically arranged bed of nails, all the sudden one of the nails would move. Of course, you didn't believe what you saw, until after a bit another nail would move. Then you began to ask questions, until you got a big smile from Allen.

**December 1969** Mr. DeVerter gave the Live Steam report. He stated that the live steamers visited Marshall Black on October 26 and Allen Guiberson in Dallas on November 1.

LIVE STEAM NEWS – We have received a flyer on the Brotherhood of Live Steamers meet in Los Angeles next May 29-31. If you want a copy contact Paul DeVerter. Briefly, the Los Angeles Live Steamers track (7 ½", 4 ¾", and 3 ½" gauges) will be in operation all three days. Stationary exhibits and traction engines are also welcome. Rail equipment must meet LALS standards which are found in any Little Engines catalog. This is to prevent damage to the track. A boiler inspection certificate must be presented or a test will be necessary. You must provide a 1/8" NPT fitting access to your boiler for this purpose.

Our engineering committee will decide on the requirements for boiler tests this month and this service will be available immediately thereafter. It is anticipated that all boilers using Chapter facilities must have been hydrostatically tested within the last 12 months to a pressure of 1 ½ times the safety valve setting. A test certificate will then be issued for the boiler. Wheel standards are also under consideration.

**January 1970** LIVE STEAM NEWS -- Grogan Brothers Lumber Company has again contributed scrap lumber to our Live Steam Division's "Crawdad Creek Railroad." Bob Armstrong and Paul DeVerter

secured a station wagon full before Christmas and the wood has been cut to tie size. However we can still use the donation of some short length pieces of 2 x 4's, or the funds to purchase them.

Austin Barr, central secretary of the Brotherhood of Live Steamers, advises that the Mid-South Live Steamers will meet on his Whitehall & Southern in Harrisburg, Arkansas in early April. He has about 3000 feet of 7 1/2" track in beautiful surroundings. Ask for details if you are interested.

Les Buford of Dallas is exploring the feasibility of forming a Texas State-wide group which will probably be incorporated to avoid personal liability. This would be a step toward uniting the many live steamers in Texas and I believe the proposal deserves our support. Let me have your comments.

--P. L. DeVerter II

**April 1970** Mr. Paul DeVerter reported that a regional live steam meet would be held at Austin Barr's farm near Whitehall, Arkansas on April 9-11 and that the Brotherhood of Live Steamers national meet will be held in Los Angeles over the Memorial Day weekend. Little local work has been done since last November.

**May 1970** LIVE STEAM NEWS After months of inactivity the live steamers are beginning to clean the clinkers out of the fire box. The Boiler Inspection Certificate has been devised and approved and printed. If you desire the issuance of a certificate on your boiler(s), please contact Bob Armstrong, Jake DeVries or Paul DeVerter. The Brotherhood Meet in Los Angeles on May 29-31 will require a current certificate or an on-the-spot hydrostatic test.

The entire infield at our track site has been mowed and beams are in place for 230 feet of track. The 1" track was stopped at 130 feet, but due to popular demand, will be extended for the entire oval. We are in need of an old automobile rear axle and housing to use as the base for our turntable. If you can supply same, please advise.

The trip to Ft. Worth aboard the VERDE VALLEY, last fall to visit the track of Alan Guiberson in Dallas was featured in the latest issue of Live Steam Magazine. Several have suggested that our Live Steam Division adopt the name "Houston Live Steamers". The purpose being to geographically identify our group so that visitor's can recognize us. This is apparently the customary type of name used in the U, S. and in England. Let me have your thoughts.

Comment: The popular demand was probably attributed to Mr. Jones who was building a 1" scale steamer. He began to come out to the site and help lay track during the week. Ultimately, his engine was later displayed at the museum in Galveston. The VERDE VALLEY is a sleeper donated to the Chapter by the Santa Fe, and was used for a number of trips. I believe it was at this time that we began to call ourselves the Houston Live Steamers.

**July 1970** LIVE STEAM REPORT The Brotherhood of Live Steamers meet in Los Angeles, May 29-31, was well attended. Newspaper reports indicated 450 registrants, with the largest number of out-of-state registrants being from Texas. The only engine from Texas was Paul DeVerter's JULIET. There were about six 3/4" locomotives, 25-1" locomotives, and 50-7 1/2" locomotives. JULIET performed

admirably the first morning. Trouble developed that afternoon, though, and steam pressure was hard to keep up. After numerous suggestions, the lubricator was removed and found to be full of water. It was promptly cleaned and refitted. The engine ran two great laps the second day until it split a switch just thrown by a bystander. Part of the valve gear hit the railhead, resulting in a bent valve rod. This put JULIET out of the running for the remainder of the meet. Better luck in 1975.

Our own club track is still standing in spite of its neglect. However, the track gang will be out again this month.

**Comment:** This was the first time I had run the engine for any extended period of time, as my running on the club track in Houston was simply back and forth for 100 feet or so. Thus I was quite pleased at the performance under some load for an extended length of time. Slide valves do not run well without lubrication, and exert a considerable amount of drag on a model locomotive. I resolved to fix the problem of low lying parts hitting the rails in a derailment, and did so by adding steps at either end for the virtual switchman to ride on, but actually being sturdy enough to protect the cylinder cocks and valve gear in the event of another derailment.

**January 1971** LIVE STEAM REPORT - by Paul DeVerter

The 1970 track record is not outstanding but was still rather impressive. The last work Sunday ended with the completion of 270 feet of runable 3/4" Scale track and 170 feet of runable 1" track. A large number of ties have been cut for additional construction but are awaiting dadoing. The immediate project is to set the remaining posts. For this a transit is needed. Does anyone know where we can borrow a transit?

Austin Barr announces that his track will again be host to the Mid-South Live Steamers on April 23-25. He is located in Harrisburg, Arkansas, near Memphis. Austin has about a mile of 7 1/2 gauge, 1 1/2" scale track.

**March 1971** Austin Barr of Harrisburg, Ark. is hosting the Spring meet of the Midsouth Live Steamers at his facility. This will be Friday, April 23, 24, and 25. Austin has 3,600 ft of 7 1/2" gauge track with sidings, steaming bays, hydraulic loading ramp, turntable, etc. He expects at least 12 locomotives to be in operation. Movies on the Genera1 from the L&N will be shown at the banquet Saturday night. At least three of us intend to drive up.

The Los Angeles Live Steamers have prepared a series of three examinations for engineers. These are switching engineer, freight engineer, and passenger engineer. After successful passage of each exam, a certificate and badge are awarded. The cost is about \$7.00 each. We are completing arrangements to give the exams here (the correspondence school approach). and award the LALS certificates, etc. I have received the switching engineer text, with questions and answers and would appreciate indications of interest from the live steamers. The freight text is finished, but the illustrations are not yet complete. The passenger text will be finished in a month or so. PLD

**May 1971** The Mid-South Live Steams hosted their annual Spring meet at Austin Barr's in Harrisburg, Arkansas on April 23~ 24, and 25. Porter Henderson, Bob Armstrong, George Werner and Paul DeVerter attended from our club. Austin's track is over 3000' long and includes several trestles, much wooded area, and steaming bays arranged in a fan shaped manner about a hydraulic lift. The entire layout is 7 1/2" gage.

There were over 20 engines under steam, and a number of displays in other scales. The most unusual 7 1/2" gage engine was a vertical boilered job from Ohio. The prettiest was a toss-up between a 4-2-4 and an 0-6-0. The majority were coal burners, although Ces Beck of San Antonio used propane and John Enders of Austin burned oil. States as far away as California, Michigan, and Massachusetts were represented with 11 live steamers from Texas.

Over 110 attended the Saturday night banquet, at which L&N movies of the General were shown. Each engineer who brought and operated his engine received a Whitehall & Southern pin from Austin. The 2nd Live Steam Magazine award was presented by the editor, Bill Fitt. The recipient was Mr. Coventry, who produced the first live steam castings commercially in the U. S., circa 1915.

The word is out that Dennis Grigassy (with a delicate push from George Werner) is again working on his Tom Thumb. Jake DeVries seems to be making progress, as does Porter Henderson with his Shay. Now we need track workers.

For those of you who plan ahead, the Pioneer Valley Live Steamers of Southwick, Massachusetts, will host the next meet of the Brotherhood of Live Steamers. The dates are October 6,7, and 8, 1972. This will be the 40th anniversary of the Brotherhood and the 20th anniversary of the PVLS. Their tracks include 3 1/2", 4 3/4", and 7 1/4" gages.

**June 1971** Great progress has been made since May at the track. All 74 piers have been set and with the aid of a surveyor's level. Hopefully, at the proper height. In addition, girders are in place for planing along 30 ft.

Since the end is now in sight, a meeting of the live steam contributors and workers will be held at the track to finalize running and operating rules. The members be notified. In the past we discussed not only the initiation fee, but monthly dues and required work hours. The suggestion has been made that a dollar value be placed on work hours so that a member who cannot work would be able to substitute \$:3, 00/hour.

Bob Armstrong is keeping the ties coming. But we need 1" lumber for more. We need short lengths 2x4's to use as spacers, We need a rear end for a turntable frame. We need a stile to cross over the track. In short, we need money, material and men.

The 3rd Texas Live Steam meet will be held at Falfurrias on the 7 1/2" gage track of Mr. L. L. Yates. The event is set for the Labor Day weekend. There is only one motel in Falfurrias, Better accommodations are found in Alice. This may be the last meet on Mr. Yates' track, since the property (next to the Bright Star Laundry) is up for sale. Plan accordingly, Paul DeVerter

**October 1971** Paul DeVerter also presented the Live Steam News which focused on the Texas and British meets.

**November 1971** The third annual Model Engineer Live Steam Efficiency Trials were held in Southampton on July 18, 1971. The contest is sponsored by "Model Engineer" magazine. It involves entries from the major clubs in England. Each club is limited to one entry in either 3/4" or 1" scale. There are about 14 entries each year.

The purpose of the contest is to pick the most efficient locomotive and driver. This is done by measuring the work done in terms of drawbar pullover a measured distance for at least 30 minutes. The contestant is given a weighted sack of coal after he has steam up. Since considerable energy is used in starting the train and the water capacity of many engines is limited, water was passed to the driver "on the run."

The Birmingham society provided the dynamometer car for the third year. Each locomotive must pull at least the driver and the inspector on the dynamometer car. The minimum load I saw was 1+ adults (no children were hauled) and the largest about 9 adults,

The engines, although being the best from each club, were subject to the same faults found at most meets. Many lost steam for inattention to the fire. Others had broken water lines, etc. All were excellent models. The prettiest was a 4-2-2 in 1" gage. With only a single pair of drivers, you would not expect such an engine to be a hauler. The livery was reddish-brown with polished brass. Everyone took photos of this engine.

When it started out, the load was 7 adults. There was a little slippage of the drivers at first. The engine quickly got up to speed and the driver held it without trouble. The crowd seemed to sense that this was an unusually fine run. When he finished, the driver took off his goggles, and the flashbulbs began to pop. Although I left early, I have since learned that this was the winning engine. A full report may be found in the September' issue of "Model Engineer".

**Comment:** I did not go over to England simply to view the Efficiency Trials. Instead, Leon Jaworski was being inaugurated as the new President of the American Bar Association, and consequently a plane load of Fulbright & Jaworski lawyers and spouses took this opportunity to go to London for the festivities. I managed to visit York, Scotland, and Wales, and see a lot of trains in the process.

**December 1971** The third Texas live steam meet was held in Falfurrias over Labor Day weekend. There were five 1-1/2" engines running, four steam and one diesel electric. The host, L. L. Yates, had his 4-6-2, Beck from San Antonio his 0-4-0, John Enders from Austin his 4-4~2, and Paul Torn of Austin Alan Guiberson's 4-6-0. Over 30 live steamers attended. The most notable and the one who traveled the farthest to get there was our Brotherhood of Live Steamers Secretary, Austin Barr. Unfortunately I did not get the name of the 4 wheel diesel owner, who was from Houston, since he had to leave suddenly because of sick relatives.

The method of firing the engines was as diverse as the wheel arrangements. Yates and Enders both use oil, although different formulations. Beck uses propane and Guiberson coal.

The week after the meet the rains came and washed out the roadbed. To make matters worse, Mr. Yates suffered a stroke and was paralyzed for a time. He is now out of the hospital and working again at the Bright Star laundry. You can't keep an 82 year old down.

Les Burford advises that the "Southwestern Live Steamers, Inc." is being formed. It is planned as a non-profit corporation to operate on a track to be built in Arlington, Texas. This track will be 2500 feet of 7-1/2" gauge in a double loop, and apparently will be a commercial venture. The best information I have is that Alan Guiberson will finance the track. Three engines are currently under construction by Paul Torn for this track. The boilers are now being fitted to the chassis. All are identical taper-boilered Rutland moguls. Les advises that dues will be nominal and if you are interested in joining or attending the organizational meeting, write Les Burford, 5516 Stonegate Road, Dallas 75209.

**March 1972** LIVE STEAM NEWS - On the Live Steam circuit there are several meets coming up which you might wish to mark on your calendar. The Mid-South Live Steamers will hold their 5th annual meet at Austin Barr's track near Harrisburg, Arkansas, on April 28-30. Last year four of our members attended the meet. Austin has about 3/4 of a mile on 7 1/2" gage track. Reservations should be made at the Ramada Inn in Jonesboro, Arkansas, which will also be the site of the banquet.

The Southwestern Live Steamers have been organized and corporate papers prepared. All members have been invited to a meet at Wimberley, Texas, on May 28. The track belongs to Henry S. Blossom. Henry advises to drive to Wimberley and then call him (847-2602) for further instructions.

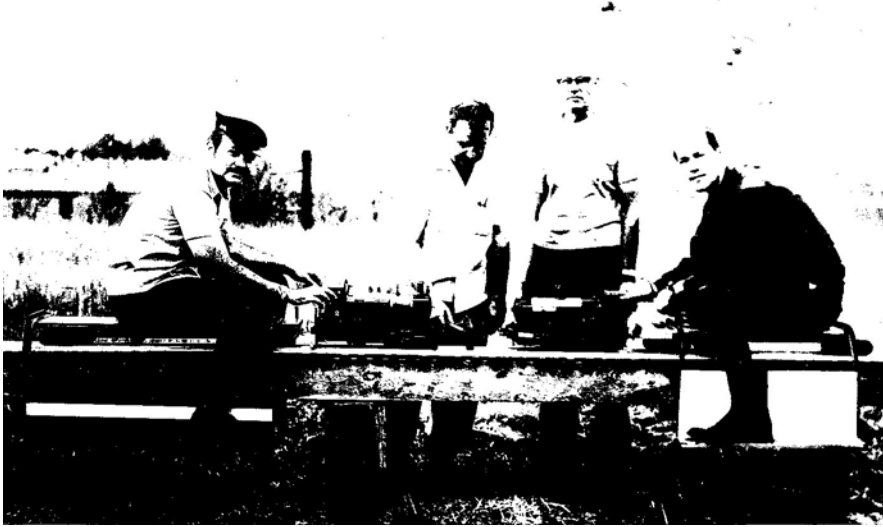
Also note that the national Brotherhood of Live Steamers meet will be held this October 1.3-15 at Southwick, Massachusetts. The host club is the Pioneer Valley Live Steamers. Track gages are 3 1/2", 4 3/4" and 7 1/4". This should be a well attended meet.

**Comment:** The corporate documents for the Southwestern Live Steamers were prepared by me. I later used much the same format to prepare the documents for the Houston Area Live Steamers. The thing I remember most about the Wimberley meet was the chiggers – who attacked my wife, kids, and me. Not a lot of fun. But there was a good turnout for the event , and that was good.

**June 1972** The Live Steam Division has disassociated itself from the Chapter and has been renamed the Houston Live Steamers. When live steam activities were first initiated, the Chapter was young and struggling and fully 20 percent of the Chapter membership was interested in live steam. At that time it was felt that the formation of a completely separate organization would dilute participation in Chapter activities. With changed circumstances, it was mutually agreed that the two groups should be separate.

**Comment:** Thus ended the news about Live Steam in the Gulf Coast Chapter Newsletter.

October 29, 1972 The Golden Spike Ceremony was held on this date at the track. Those in attendance were George Werner, Bob Armstrong, Jake DeVries, and Paul DeVerter, plus someone or more. More, because these four are in a photograph, which someone else had to take. So, this meant that we had finished and were able to run the 440 fott loop of dual gauge track.



The "Golden Spike" was tapped into a predrilled hole in one of the ties and set by Bob Armstrong, who is holding the hammer. We struggled on for a while longer with the track and even had a meet, where we invited the folks from Dallas to come down and see the track and see us run.

SOUTHWESTERN LIVE STEAMERS, INC.

This undated bulletin is scanned into my computer, and here is the report of the Houston Meet, which was held on February 11, 1973:

**February 11, 1973** HOUSTON MEET The Houston Live Steamers, Inc. hosted the Southwestern Club for the February 11th regular meeting. Five from Southwestern Live Steamers, Inc. attended. The Houston Club, after more than four and one half years work, has just completed 440' of oval, dual gauge 3&1/2" and 4&1/4" trestle mounted track. Paul DeVerter had "Juliet II" ( with Baker Valve Gear), and George Werner had "Juliet" (with Slip Eccentric Valve Gear). and both engines performed beautifully. Paul's Juliet pulled two husky passengers around the oval with no trouble, and furthermore, used probably a "teaspoon" of coal. Some 10 members of Houston Live Steamers, Inc. attended. The weather was good, but the recent heavy rains made one thankful the track was elevated. Otherwise, a boat might have been needed and numerous washouts might have been the order of the day. A wonderful time was had by all, and thanks to the H.L.S., Paul DeVerter, and George Werner.

**Comment:** I was unable to date the scan, but I have since received the correct date from The SWLS Secretary, James Hitzfelder. The mention of the 1" scale track gauge is incorrect, and should have been 4 3/4" gauge, probably caused by lack of a 1" scale member in Dallas who wrote up the event. The biggie I remember was that one of the members from Dallas got caught in the very muddy yard, and dug several feet of ruts in Kercher's front yard trying to escape. This caused me to have to bring several wash tubs of dirt out to the track to repair Kercher's yard.

Ultimately, Bill Kercher took off for California, and while his wife did not run us off, I did not feel entirely welcome invading her back yard. So, we quit going out there and I do not know if the track stayed up, or



if it was torn down – probably the latter, especially when new tenants came along. George Werner had acquired a JULIET with slip eccentric valve gear, and he ran it a few times on the track. It was present for our Golden Spike ceremony. He later sold it. I will try to find some later information, but I think things sort of died a quiet death over the next couple of years. It is very hard to keep up a track with so few members, and especially on someone else's property with an absentee landlord.

Over the years, we had several other Live Steamers in the area. I remember one who had a home on the San Jacinto River somewhere near Highlands. He had a meet or two at his home. The 7 ½" track was pretty roughly laid, and it was hard for an engine of any size to stay on the track because of the ups and downs. His name was Cliff Pettis, and his son was also interested. In fact, his son designed a transistorized circuit to operate a gong, which sounded like a bell on a Diesel. I built one of the circuits, and managed to get it compacted enough to fit under the gong itself. I believe the gong is still on the little 0-4-0 25T GE switcher that is now owned by Ron Pasley. I remember drawing up the circuit and think it was published by the SW Live Steamers and maybe even by HALS.

We had one 1 ½" Live Steamer from California. I do not remember his name, but he was colored and was a friend of Walt Disney. He moved to Houston for a couple of years, and brought his engine with him. I do not believe he ever ran it in Texas, and can not remember his name, as I only met him once. I think he was not happy in Texas and soon went back to California.

I began work on a 3/4" scale 4-4-0 (Virginia), and never finished the engine. I got the boiler put together, and the engine ran fine on compressed air, but I got busy doing other things and have never finished the tender and cab. At some point in time, I decided to build a GE 25T 1 ½" scale engine. At the time I did so, I knew nothing about welding metals, so the first thing I did was buy a small aircraft torch and took it to a commercial school on Washington Ave., where I paid for some lessons in how to turn it on and do some fusion welding of sheet metal. Then I enrolled in a night High School welding class for two semesters, and learned to use an arc welder. At the time, there were 2-25T GE Diesels working in Galveston at the large grain elevator across from the GC&SF Station. I took lots of photos and measurements, and used those to build my engine. I numbered it No. 3 and had a logo designed for the Crawdad Creek Railroad, in honor of the numerous crawfish mounds at Kercher's house. I built the engine small enough that I could haul it around in the back of our old Ford Station Wagon. I took it to Annetta several times, it was a good hauler. This is the engine I mentioned earlier that now belongs to Ron Pasley. I remember loaning it to the HALS group at the request of Lee Bawcom, about the time Marshall Black died. I'm told it performed well in the building of the Zube track.